

To: Honorable Committee on Public Health

From: James E. Howell

Re: Raised Bill No. 1014

Honorable Committee members,

I write to you in support of Raised Bill No. 1014: An Act Concerning Health Insurance Coverage for Bone Marrow Testing. This bill will increase the number of bone marrow donors thus assisting cancer patients seeking a suitable bone marrow donor.

Cancer has touched me as an individual as it has many others in Connecticut. I have lost my Father-in-law, Grandfather and Father to cancer. My father, William Howell spent his last 10 days of his life suffering in a hospice facility and having lived through that experience I have found the treating of cancer patients vital, not only to the patient but to the patients family members as well. Currently families searching for a donor are taking the responsibility of running their own donor drives even though the odds of finding a match are unlikely. The added stress of trying to raise money for testing while incurring patient cost of medical fees, travel and lodging in search of a donor is unfair.

I would like to share my experience of becoming a bone marrow donor. In September of 2006 a bone marrow drive was being held in Watertown and I went to learn about becoming a donor. I read about this event in the local newspaper. After arriving and speaking with the staff and completing the required paperwork I was informed I had to pay around \$70 to become a donor. This came as a shock to me and especially since I did not have the funds on my person. I was first told I could not be a donor but after discussion I was allowed and now I am on the national registry for bone marrow donors. I was dumbfounded that the donor was required to pay and that I might have been turned away. Since then I have thought how many people would be donors if their insurance company would cover the cost.

Similar bills have been passed in RI, MA and NH and I hope we can add Connecticut to the list as well.

Thank you and once again please support Raised Bill No. 1014